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FOR WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2018  
TAGS: PTER PGOV PHUM PREL CO  
SUBJECT: MAPP/OAS NOTES GOC PROGRESS IN COMBATING NEW  
CRIMINAL GROUPS

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer

Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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¶1. (C) The draft MAPP/OAS (OAS Mission in Support of the Peace Process) eleventh quarterly report cites recent GOC progress in combating emerging criminal groups, but notes that narcotrafficking profits enable these groups to adapt and recruit even under sustained military pressure.

MAPP/OAS Chief of Mission Sergio Caramagna told us privately he credits Uribe's personal intervention with security force commanders for the GOC's increased operations against the emerging groups. Caramagna also voiced support for the GOC's extradition of 15 high-level paramilitary leaders to the United States, suggesting that the extraditions might encourage former mid-level commanders to cooperate with the Justice and Peace Law (JPL) process. End Summary

Spotlight on Emerging Groups

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¶2. (SBU) The draft MAPP/OAS eleventh report (please protect until public release) cites recent GOC progress in combating new criminal groups. (The report's discussion of GOC reintegration programs, the JPL process, and victims rights/assistance is reported septel.) The MAPP/OAS applauds the GOC's political will to confront the groups and reviews recent major security force successes such as the April 29 killing of Victor Manuel Mejia Munera and the May 1 capture of his twin brother, Miguel Angel Mejia Munera. The brothers were key in rebuilding criminal-narco networks from Bolivar to Norte de Santander departments. The report also praise the capture of other emerging group leaders, including former paramilitary Feris Chadid in Cordoba on April 16, as well as the surrender of a large band of former paramilitaries known as the "Cacique Pipinta" in Caldas. In Narino, the MAPP/OAS notes that increased security force presence produced a 60% fall in homicides in four municipalities in the first quarter of 2008.

¶3. (SBU) The MAPP/OAS also describes GOC advances in rooting out collusion between some security force elements and the new criminal groups. The Colombian National Police (CNP) arrested CNP Lt. Colonel Juan Carlos Martinez who was providing security to the Mejia Munera brothers in Cesar on May 21; arrested 11th Brigade Junin battalion commander Lt.

Colonel Alvaro Zambrano and 11th Brigade Gaula commander Major Julio Parga for promoting extrajudicial killings and collaborating with new criminal groups in Cordoba on April 16; and detained Army Colonel Hernan Mejia for extrajudicial killings and collusion with paramilitaries in Cesar in 2004 on May 6. (Note: Defense Minister Santos assigned the highly decorated Mejia to administrative duty in January, 2006 on suspicion of collusion with paramilitaries. MAPP/OAS cites additional investigations into institutional corruption, noting that breaking security force collusion with such groups is key to halting their growth.)

¶4. (SBU) Despite recent combat successes, the report warns that the groups--using lucrative narcotrafficking profits--have shown a capacity to adapt, recruit, and expand even under sustained security force pressure. Many groups target the demobilized and unemployed youth for forced recruitment. In some areas, the groups are responding to the GOC's new aggressive strategy with targeted murders of military and judicial authorities. Communities affected by the illegal groups face mobility restrictions, extortion, forced coca cultivation, threats, and assassination. The MAPP/OAS notes the apolitical, criminal nature of the emerging groups, whose primary purpose is the control of drug routes and coca cultivation areas formerly maintained by the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), but cautions that the groups pose a threat to the long-term success of the peace process.

#### OAS Credits Uribe's Intervention

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¶5. (C) Caramagna credited President Uribe's personal intervention for the GOC's enhanced targeting of emerging criminal groups. After a three hour breakfast earlier in February between Uribe and OAS Secretary General Insulza, the president ordered Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos and CNP Chief Oscar Naranjo to make combating the new groups a top priority. Uribe followed up by repeatedly exhorting the security forces to capture new group leaders in weekly town meetings (consejos comunitarios) in key departments such as Cesar and Cordoba. GOC security forces have complied with Uribe's order despite some initial resistance from Naranjo. Caramagna said the rural police or Carabineros, who have primary responsibility for combating new groups, provide him with weekly updates on their actions and compare notes on problem areas.

¶6. (SBU) The report also credits the CNP with improving its tracking and reporting mechanisms in response to MAPP/OAS concerns that the CNP did not regularly identify combat kills after clashes with emerging groups. It notes that through February, 2008, 70% of the new criminal group members reported killed by the CNP were listed as "John Does." In contrast, since March the CNP has identified 95% of new criminal group members killed in combat. MAPP/OAS notes that identification facilitates tracking recidivism and helps prevent extrajudicial killings.

#### Extraditions' Impact on JPL

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¶7. (C) Caramagna told us he supports the GOC's recent extradition of 15 high-level paramilitary leaders to the United States and does not believe the extraditions mean the end of the JPL process. He said the extraditions show Uribe and the GOC remain in control of the process, and that there is a cost to non-compliance with JPL obligations. Caramagna said there was not one incident of violence or protest after the extraditions, unlike when the GOC moved Diego Murillo to prison in 2005, and stressed that many mid-level commanders in the JPL process have a wealth of information about paramilitary crimes and assets. One mid-level commander (Iguana) has clarified more crimes by himself than the 15 leaders put together. Caramagna underscored that after the extraditions, mid-level commanders may now be even more inclined to talk.

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